

Museum and Cultural Advisory Board - Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular meeting at the Mesa Arts Center, One East Main Street, third floor, south Studios conference room, on May 12, 2010.

Members Present:

Douglas Brimhall
Peter G. Cook
Vincent DiBella
Dr. D. Kent Layton

Lars Nielson, Jr.
Rebecca Nolan
Dr. Robbi D. Venditti

Members Absent:

Amanda Buscas
Keiko Dilbeck
Kit Filbey
Pamela Williams

Staff Present:

Kari Kent
Tom Wilson

Rob Schultz
Jean Kaminski

Guests Present:

MB Finnerty
Merlin Ellis

Douglas Brimhall, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Douglas Brimhall, Chair, asked for any corrections/additions/deletions to the minutes of April 14. There being none, Dr. Kent Layton made a motion, Peter Cook, seconded, and the Board members present unanimously approved the minutes of April 14. They will be posted on the City's web page.

Items from Citizens Present:

Merlin Ellis attended the meeting for a second time. He is an architect, lives in Mesa, and is interested in arts and culture in his community.

Rob Schultz took the opportunity to introduce Mesa Arts Center's new Volunteer and Events Coordinator, Shawn Lawson. Ms. Lawson began working on Monday, May 10, and hit the ground running. She stated that she is grateful for the opportunity and has many years experience working within a municipality. She spent 11 years in Peoria and six years in Glendale prior to that. She is excited to be a part of and looking forward to the growth in the East Valley.

Introduction of New Board Member Pamela Williams – Douglas Brimhall

Pamela Williams was not present.

Present Information and Discuss – Update on Public Art Component of Light Rail – MB Finnerty

MB Finnerty is the coordinator with METRO for the public art components along the Light Rail stations. The artists, architects, and contractors work together on an immense public outreach campaign to include customers and neighbors that surround the stations. There have been over 100 volunteers serving on a Station Art Review Committee panel (SARC) and on a Regional Rail Arts Committee (RRAC).

Each station boasts its own unique character with artwork that strives to add substance, style, and a touch of whimsy to the transit experience. The public art component can transform the landscape and enhance public dialogue.

The Federal Transportation Agency encourages the inclusion of public art on light rail systems because of its ability to contribute a sense of neighborhood pride near stations.

The public art artist collaborates with architects and engineers, sometimes by integrating works into system surfaces and structures, and sometimes as stand-alone artwork pieces.

METRO issues a call to artists. A public artist is chosen for each station – in Mesa there will be four stations and two artists working on one traction power station. Rob Schultz, Assistant Arts and Culture Director, and Kimberly Grace represent Mesa on the RRAC committee at this time, but more Mesa stakeholders will be added to the RRAC and SARC committees.

The Budget for public art along Light Rail in Mesa is \$1.2M, which is less than one percent (%) of the construction costs. The station located at Center and Mail will receive slightly more for that art piece, as it is considered to be a central station in a prominent location.

Four, nine-person selection committees comprised of RRAC, SARC members, and Mesa/METRO staff will review the applications and select the artists. Once the artists have been selected, their designs will be reviewed at 30%, 65%, and possibly 95% by METRO, RRAC, SARC, and at public meetings.

Douglas Brimhall, Chair, asked how members of the RRAC and SARC committees are appointed and/or selected. Ms. Finnerty responded saying that there would be an application process for the SARC Committee and a Councilmember would recommend them. For the RRAC committee, the process hasn't been formalized, but Rob Schultz stated that there would be an application that may go through the City Manager and to Council for approval and/or recommendation. Ms. Finnerty commented that she would prefer arts people on the RRAC committee and people who have, at the very least, an interest in art on the SARC committee. It is required to live within one mile of one of the stations in East Mesa to be on the SARC committee.

Ms. Finnerty said that the process to select a public art artist is approximately an 80 day process from the time the RFQ goes out until an artist is selected. She anticipates the RFQ to go out in mid-June.

Rob Schultz will keep the Board up-to-date on the progress of the Light Rail extension in Mesa, and the application process for the committees. Ms. Finnerty said she would be happy to come back with up-dated information at any time throughout the project.

A Board member will be selected at the June 9 meeting to represent the Board on the RRAC committee. The commitment involved would be:

- Sit on the selection panel (approximately a four to eight hour commitment) – each station (four) will have its own panel (not sure at this time if there will be interviews following the selection)
- RRAC – meeting to approve selected artists
- A meeting at 30% completion, 65%, and 95%
- Optional – public meetings to act as advocates (the whole Board is encouraged to attend the public meetings)
- Approximately a nine – 12 month time frame
- There may be occasional RRAC meetings to update on progress

Staff Reports

Arizona Museum for Youth – Rob Schultz Reported for Sunnee Spencer

- Opened "Sounds Like Art" on April 22 with a reception – had 200 in attendance.
- The Exhibition Design Team successfully launched the new ArtZone and ArtVille areas, which includes the new "City Blocks" centerpiece in ArtVille.
- The Museum had their second annual fundraiser, "Tune Into Art," with 120 in attendance and an approximate net of \$9,300.
- Museum staff met with the New Directions Institute to discuss a collaborative partnership called "Artful Brains" that would be launched this fall.
- Renovation is complete; however, still going through the punch list. The Gallery Shop is open along with the new lobby entrance.
- The Museum received \$4,000 from M&I Bank and a pledge of \$10,000 from Boeing for the upcoming "Jump to Japan" exhibition.
- The Museum continues to have an upward trend for volunteer hours, membership hours, and attendance.
- "Play Ball" partnership continues to be a centerpiece at the Museum; people are enjoying the exhibition and attendance numbers are up. The exhibit comes down in November, but will be back in February 2011 for approximately six months. Lisa Anderson is doing a great job of obtaining cash and non-cash support for the exhibition.

Peter Cook asked about the relationship with the Mesa Historical Museum and whether they were going to close. Kari Kent responded that they are reducing their hours to three days a week and the City continues to help fund the curator for "Play Ball" who is also working on distributing some of the Museum's collections in public spaces, such as the Library. The Museum also continues to do fundraising and is using volunteers to remain open.

Arizona Museum of Natural History – Tom Wilson

- April attendance was 103,500, which puts the Museum on pace to close out the fiscal year at 128,000 to 130,000 visitors; down approximately 4 percent (%) from last year. Dr. Wilson feels that those figures speak well for the Museum in this economy.
- There is strong attendance this time of year with school bus tours; schools are coming from Chandler, Littleton, Wickenburg, and as far away as Ajo and Yuma, as well as Apache and Navaho Counties.
- The Therizinosaur exhibit has been good for the Museum and will be extended for another six months.
- The Museum is creating a new entry to the Natural History wing and naming it "Origins." The exhibit will look at the universe from approximately 14 billion years ago to approximately two million years ago. "Origins" will show

vignettes in the development of the universe through to the development of the moon and the earth; showing changes in the continents and using iconic images from Arizona whenever possible.

- Mesa Grande had a successful open house in March. The Museum is now moving onto the next phase – the development of a small visitor's center and further development of the trail and shade structures.
- The Museum is working on re-programming the Federal Building and looking at rehabilitation costs. With inflation and other circumstances, the building will require more infrastructure than previously recommended in 2005. Ultimately, The City will have a better building, but it will cost more than if the City had been able to implement the programming designed in 2005.
- The Museum's website has been upgraded – added an "exploration station" and information on hosting a birthday party at the Museum.

Mesa Arts Center/Mesa Contemporary Arts – Rob Schultz

- Class registration for summer is strong – up approximately 50% over last year in revenue and student registrations. Staff continues to market the classes; through word of mouth from teachers, students, and staff, it is going well.
- Spring session was strong also – up approximately 45% over spring 2009. This trend is attributed to marketing better, expansion of the Glass Studio to accommodate more students, and "staycations" – people staying home rather than traveling.
- Offering "economy classes" for youth this summer – more students required to make the class a go; normally classes require an enrollment of at least seven students – the "economy classes" would have a minimum number of 10 in order to make it go allowing MAC to offer the class at a lower fee.
- Planning for the Day of the Dead Festival in the fall is underway. Shawn Lawson, new Volunteer and Events Coordinator, will be taking the lead. Planning for the annual Mesa Arts Festival (formerly Holiday Art and Music Festival) in December will begin soon.
- Planning for the September 10 Opening Event has begun. Last year there were approximately 6,000 – 6,500 in attendance.
- MAC Store, operated by the Mesa Arts Center Foundation, has decided to close the store from Memorial Day until Labor Day. Through May, items are on sale from 20 – 75% off. Store sales are slow and low during the summer months, and the Foundation felt that it would save money in the long run; closing during the hot months would reduce operating and staffing costs.

Director's Report – Kari Kent, Acting Director

Kari Kent gave a heads up that there will be a lot of publicity coming up for the City's "Celebration of Freedom" event on July 2 and 3, from 6 – 10 p.m. each night. You can also volunteer to help out with the event. Click on the link for more detailed information: <http://www.azcelebrationoffreedom.org/>. There will be food, activities, entertainment, and fireworks each night and will require many hands to be a success.

Shop Mesa: Get the Arts program will be featured in the June/July issue of *Phoenix Magazine*. The program encourages shopping in Mesa, and by turning in your Mesa receipts, you receive "Mesa Bucks" for the amount of sales tax on your receipt (\$3 minimum and \$250 maximum per receipt). To-date, approximately \$60,000 in "Mesa Bucks" has been issued and approximately \$15,000 has been redeemed. The program was slated to end June 2010; however, it has been decided to continue the program through next year.

Arts and Culture went to Council with our proposed budget reductions. Due in part to the letter sent from the Board, Council is looking at funding that might be made available to the Founding Resident Companies. There is a desire from Council to do a one-time funding opportunity for some of MAC's Founding Resident Companies. MAC has six active Founding Resident Companies – they include Southwest Shakespeare, Metropolitan Youth Symphony, Symphony of the Southwest, Mesa Encore Theatre, Ballet Etudes, and East Valley Children's Theatre. Ms. Kent met with the City Manager and he stated that if he gave MAC \$15,000 next year, how might that money be allocated to help the Resident Companies. Staff came up with an idea where it would be issued as an in-kind credit to the Companies that they could use toward rent; building sets; marketing expenses such as window clings, radio ads; etc. Ms. Kent has started to meet with the Presidents/Chairs of the Companies and they are appreciative and said that it would definitely be a benefit to them. A meeting with the Companies to discuss further is set for next week.

Dr. Kent Layton, former Chair of Ballet Etudes' Board, commented that historically, the City allocated \$120,000 a year in grants to the Resident Companies, which was completely cut from the Budget five years ago. The City seeing the importance of supporting these local companies means a great deal to them and view this as a first step in the right direction.

Douglas Brimhall, Chair, asked for an update on the new Director, Cindy Ornstein. Ms. Kent responded that she will begin on July 6 and has been having a weekly discussion with her. She is ready to go – she was in town a few weekends ago to look for a home and attended the Arizona Museum for Youth fundraiser “Turn Into Art,” and she has been in contact with staff gathering information and planning. She and her family will be in Mesa in time for the “Celebration of Freedom” event.

Report on Conferences and/or Meetings/Performances Attended: Board Members – Information Only

Doug Brimhall, Chair, reported that he went through the new Sun Dust Gallery at 48 W. Main Street in Mesa. He didn’t realize that it was there and wanted to let everyone know about this eclectic gallery. The owner also holds a series of programs on how to sell art along with other outreach opportunities. He encouraged everyone to stop by and visit the gallery.

He and Amanda Buscas also attended a conference sponsored by the state’s Department of Education in conjunction with the Arizona Commission on the Arts. The conference spoke on how to get the word out and promote how important art education is to our students.

Mr. Brimhall also attended the Mayor’s meet and greet a few weeks ago.

Peter Cook announced that as he approaches the end of his two three-year terms with the Board, this would be his last meeting. Doug Brimhall, Chair, expressed appreciation for his many years of service and contributions to the Board and to arts and culture in Mesa.

Dr. Kent Layton reported that he attended a retirement for Jeff Harris who has been the chorale director at Westwood High School for 30 years. Mr. Harris is also the conductor of the Sonoran Desert Chorale, one of the Founding Resident Companies that is in-active at this time due to budget restraints.

Dr. Layton also stated that Ballet Etudes, another Founding Resident Company, will be performing “Cinderella” this coming weekend on Friday and Saturday on the new Chandler stage.

Lars Nielson, Jr. stated that he has a challenge between his work schedule and traveling and making the Board meeting on Wednesday afternoons. He asked if it was possible to move the meeting day to Thursdays rather than Wednesdays starting in July. The issue will be on the June agenda for decision and a consensus.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kari Kent, Acting Director
Arts and Culture Department